

the wind turbines, we still have to build and operate the nuclear power-plant because, as we pointed out, the wind turbines only operate about 22 percent of the time.

My hope would be that we would not have a one-size-fits-all national mandate on States that are seeking to create clean energy. Tennessee wants to do its part. As I said, nuclear power creates 70 percent of the carbon-free energy in the United States. It produces 33 percent of the carbon-free energy in the Tennessee Valley through TVA, and TVA just opened a new reactor and they are planning more. Why would we impose on a State which is already leading the country in terms of helping to produce clean energy, carbon-free energy—why would we impose a mandate on that State that would raise its rates or impose new taxes and drive away jobs from industries that cannot afford to pay the higher rates and at the same time put on our mountain tops, from Bristol to Chattanooga, these huge wind machines that destroy the view?

We have 10 million people every year who come to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, nearly three times as many as come to Yellowstone. They come to see the mountains; they don't come to see the wind turbines. I guarantee, if we continue to provide incentives and mandates to put up these 300-, 400-, 500-foot-tall wind turbines with red flashing lights, that is all the visitors will see when they come to Tennessee. They will not be able to see anything else.

I am eager to work with Senators BINGAMAN and DOMENICI on the Energy bill. I had the pleasure, the last 4 years, of serving with them on that committee. I admire the way they work together. They made a point 2 years ago of saying that when we go too far in either direction, we will pull back a little bit so we can make sure we have a good, strong bill. I believe the bill in 2005 was underestimated. I believe the bill produced in 2005, produced by Senators DOMENICI and BINGAMAN and the Senate working with the House, literally set America on a different course in terms of producing large amounts of reliable, affordable, clean energy. It helped us do that in a way that would keep the costs of natural gas down, which was very important to us at that time and still is today.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from the Southeastern Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners expressing the same views I have just expressed, that such a mandate would cause us to end up paying higher electric prices with nothing to show for it. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. ALEXANDER. Finally, I would like to reiterate what we could better do with the money. I see the Senator from North Dakota here. I mentioned a little earlier that he has said North Dakota is the Saudi Arabia of wind, and I admire North Dakota for that. I admire him for his outspoken advocacy of that, and I hope all the giant wind machines go to North Dakota. That is where I would like them to be, just not in Tennessee—not just because of how they look but because in our neck of the woods they do not work. They raise our taxes, or they raise our rates, or they destroy our mountains, or they run away jobs from industries and tourists who do not want to be part of that. I would rather see us look for better ways to spend those dollars.

As I suggested earlier, we could take the same amount of money we would be taxed, if we choose not to build these, by providing 205 million \$2 light bulbs, which would be the equivalent energy savings of almost 2 nuclear reactors, or it would be the equivalent of 3,700 of these wind turbines, which would run along the ridge tops from Bristol to Chattanooga, or it would pay the monthly electric bill for Tennessee's 2.5 million TVA residential customers, every Tennessee residential customer, for a month and a half, or it would put a new scrubber on TVA's coal-fired powerplants every 9 month period.

I am afraid this is an idea looking for a problem to solve. It may solve it in North Dakota, it might solve it in New Mexico and perhaps it does in Colorado, but it does not in Tennessee. It raises our taxes, raises our rates, ruins our mountains, and it sends jobs away, runs them away.

I hope, in a spirit of bipartisanship, perhaps the Senator from New Mexico, one of our most thoughtful Senators, the leader of this debate, will decide there are other things we can focus on rather than a one-size-fits-all mandate which may work in some States but does not in my State.

I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF
REGULATORY UTILITY COMMISSIONERS,
Little Rock, AR, May 31, 2007.

DEAR SENATORS BINGAMAN AND DOMENICI, AND CONGRESSMEN DINGELL AND BARTON: The undersigned state utility commissioners are writing to express our concerns about the nationwide, mandatory federal renewable portfolio standard (RPS) being discussed/introduced by Senator Bingaman. As state regulators, we are responsible for ensuring that retail electricity consumers receive affordable, reliable electric service. We are concerned that a uniform, federal RPS mandate fails to recognize adequately that there are significant differences among the states in terms of available and cost-effective renewable energy resources and that having such a standard in energy legislation will ultimately increase consumers' electricity bills.

The reality is that not all states are fortunate enough to have abundant traditional renewable energy resources, such as wind, or have them located close enough to the load to render them cost-effective. This is espe-

cially true in the Southeast and large parts of the Midwest. Even in regions of the country that do have access to wind energy, there is frequently stiff local opposition to building huge wind turbines, significant costs for the additional transmission needed, and reliability concerns. As a result, some wind renewable energy projects do not get built, while others take years to build. The availability of other renewable energy resources, such as geothermal, is even more limited.

Because of the limited availability and cost-effectiveness of traditional renewable energy resources, we are deeply concerned that our utilities will be forced to buy renewable energy credits from the federal government or from renewable energy generators in other regions of the country. Correspondingly, our retail electricity consumers will end up paying higher electricity prices, with nothing to show for it.

Renewable energy resources may be able to make a significant contribution to energy production in those regions of the country that have abundant renewable resources. In fact, over 20 states and the District of Columbia have already seen fit to approve their own RPS programs based on the resources available to them. Moreover, those states have included a wider array of energy resources in their definitions of eligible renewable resources than the proposed federal RPS mandate. Some states consider power produced from municipal solid waste, small hydroelectric facilities or coal waste to be renewable energy. Other states count expenditures on demand-side management or alternative compliance payments toward meeting the state RPS requirements. None of these alternative renewable energy resources, however, would receive credit under the Senate version of a federal RPS program.

While state public service commissions and energy service providers should certainly consider available and cost-effective renewable energy resource options as they make long-term decisions for incremental energy needs, the imposition of a strict federal RPS mandate, as contrasted with a state-driven cost-effectiveness determination, will only result in higher electricity prices for our consumers. Because the availability and cost-effectiveness of traditional renewable energy resources varies so widely among states and regions, we believe that decisions regarding renewable energy portfolios should be left to the states. If, however, the Congress desires to address renewable energy objectives in the upcoming Energy Bill, we urge you to expressly allow each individual state to determine the extent to which renewable energy can be reliably and cost effectively utilized within that state.

Sincerely,

(Signed by Members of the Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee commissioners.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I see my colleague from North Dakota wishes to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to be here supporting a piece of legislation which I think advances this country's energy interests. I am a member of the Senate Energy Committee. I have worked with Senator BINGAMAN and Senator DOMENICI not only on the previous Energy bill in 2005 but on this Energy bill, and I think this is a good bill. We are going to improve it some on the floor of the Senate, but it came out of the Energy